

## Beautiful Ben by Marmarhargreeves

**Category:** IT (Movies - Muschietti), IT - Stephen King

**Genre:** Aged-Up Losers Club (IT), Ben centric, College, Eating Disorder Not Otherwise Specified, Eating Disorders, Graphic Description, Multi, Polyamorous Losers Club (IT), Richie Tozier Has ADHD, Self-Hatred, Stanley Uris Has OCD, ben hanscom centric, body image issues, is this me projecting?? yes, nothing too explicitly written but that may change in the future, obviously ED is a huge thing in this

**Language:** English

**Characters:** Ben Hanscom, Beverly Marsh, Bill Denbrough, Eddie Kaspbrak, Mike Hanlon, Richie Tozier, Stanley Uris

**Relationships:** Bill Denbrough/Mike Hanlon/Ben Hanscom/Eddie Kaspbrak/Beverly Marsh/Richie Tozier/Stamley Uris

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**Summary:**

They all loved Ben no matter what size, he knew that (well they all sure hoped he knew), but they all supported Ben in this journey as they watched his confidence grow. He's lost two dress sizes by now. In no more than 4 months. That's...that's a lot in such a short amount of time. The seven of them just correlated it to his new daily gym activities, never even thinking to imagine it could be anything else of any sort.

# 1. Chapter 1

## Author's Note:

this is my first time writing for something that isn't the umbrella academy so,,, pls be kind as i work on my characterizations!!

i've fallen in love with the losers club and it's my new hyperfixation...and there is a severe lack of ben love so!!! i thought i'd contribute my share!!

i plan on making this a multi-chaptered work but i'm currently busy with school/work so i'll update when i can. i hope u all enjoy and thank u for reading:')

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tumblr: [talk to me:](#))

For once, Mike is not the first person to notice that something is not right. Ever since the six wonderful, beautiful people came into his life, the farm boy quickly became known as the most receptive of the bunch. He has always been the first one to notice when Richie was experiencing sensory overload - his legs bouncing at an even faster degree than usual and his rapid fast eye blinking and knows when he needs to get out of whatever the situation is that is overwhelming. Mike can tell when Eddie is on the verge of a panic/asthma attack - he can pinpoint the subtle, but the quickening of the smaller man's breathing. When Stan's mind is screaming at him to repeat repeat repeat, even though he tries his very best to hide it from everyone, Mike knows what is happening and is the only person other than Eddie who can help. When Bill is starting to suffocate in guilt or when Bev doesn't feel safe in a room full of men, Mike knows. He always does. And he knows how to calm them down, how to talk them out of whatever they're going through. Mike is so in tune with every single one of his partners - even more so than with his own self. He has the ability to read all of their body languages faster than Bill could ride his bike through the streets.

That's just always been Mike. Solid, constant Mike.

Said man sat with a book in hand on the couch in their apartment. Alone. Which was the first time he has been granted solitude in a good while. They were all off doing their errands of the day. Eddie gave Richie a ride to his therapy appointment and the two were going on a date afterward, Bev and Stan have class until 9 PM, and Ben and Bill are at work. Which gave Mike a few hours of unheard-of alone time. Seven young 20 something-year-olds all living together under one roof can be a bit overwhelming, even for a man who thrives off of social interaction and touch. Which is exactly why when a tear-stained Bill comes home three hours early, Mike feels his stomach immediately drop.

"M-Mikey," Bill chokes out, beelining right to his boyfriend and wasting no time throwing himself on the larger man.

"Oh baby..." Mike practically chucks his book to the side and catches his frantic boyfriend's embrace. He runs his hands gently through his soft brown locks. He slowly rocks them both back and forth at a steady pace, "Shh, it's alright love. I got you, I got you.."

"B...Ben-Ben...He-he-he n... I...I c-can't I-I...FUCK!" Bill struggles, crying out the last profane word with a tone laced with nothing but pure, bitter anger. Mike knows how Bill gets when he's in a state like this. He has watched his beautiful boy's mind work faster than his mouth can keep up with on more than one occasion. The perpetual fog from his brain to mouth even denser than it usually was. His speech impediment flares up to such a frustrating degree that Bill can't even begin to express himself like he wants or needs to. And witnessing his lover go through that pains Mike every single time.

“Take your time, Billy. You’re okay.” Mike coos, planting a soft kiss to the top of his head. The two spend the next few moments in silence, the sound of Mike whispering soft affirmations to his lover and Bill sniffing filling their empty apartment.

After 10 minutes pass, Mike can feel Bill start to relax in his arms. The tension that Bill was holding throughout his entire body started to ease and Mike could hear his breathing steadily even out.

“That’s it, baby. You’re doing so well,” Mike affirms, “Whenever you’re ready, think you can tell me what’s got you so worked up? You said something about Ben?” Mike presses gently.

“Y-yeah,” Bill nods against his chest, twiddling the white button of the button-down shirt Mike was wearing between his thumb and index finger.

“What’s going on with Ben, love?”

Bill took a deep breath and swallowed roughly, working himself up for this conversation.

“B-Ben came to eat l-lunch w-with me on break wh-which he always does now. B-but I’ve n..noticed that he always g-goes to the bathroom a..after,” Bill starts, glancing up at Mike who gives him an encouraging nod him to continue ignoring the growing sinking feeling in his stomach as he starts to put the pieces together.

“He ex-excused h-himself to the bathroom a-again. I w-w-waited a bit and then f...f-followed because I just, I didn’t w-w-want to be r-ri-ri-

r,” Bill squeezed his eyes shut, shaking his head slightly, “Correct.” Bill finally hisses out.

“I didn’t w-want to be fucking correct. But I was, M-Mikey, he-he was choking. I-I heard him. I-I fucking heard it a-all! I couldn’t h...h-handle it and I just left h-him there like a c...coward.”

Mike felt his body go cold. His mind was racing he started to recall every meal he can remember having with Ben. Did he always go to the bathroom? Was he finishing his food? The more he thought about it, the more he’s starting to realize. It’s all clicking. The way Ben would chat his way through their family meals, too engaged with the company around him and not enough on the actual act of eating. He’d chat up a storm with his lovers which wasn’t out of the ordinary - he’s one of the best listeners.

Mike starts to recall every “I ate at school” or “I’m not hungry - I had a big lunch” reply he’s heard over the last few months. And there have been many. How did Mike not notice? How could he not see that his lover, his compassionate, beyond empathetic, beautiful lover was struggling so deeply? Realizing how smart, how meticulous this plan of Ben’s was made him feel even worse. He didn’t want the others to know; he went above and beyond to make sure of that. Ben didn’t want to confide in them, didn’t want to allow himself to be vulnerable about this vice that he is obviously ashamed of. How could he have missed this?

Ben started to lose weight after joining his new Architecture friends to the gym. It started off as weight lifting after Ben came home from class one day saying he struggled to lift all of the wood and heavy materials in one of his classes. He seemed pretty dejected, frustrated with himself. Mike can recall how much better Ben appeared to feel about himself after he started his new routine though. As he grew stronger, his waistline started to trim down. They all loved Ben no matter what size, he knew that (well Mike sure hoped he did), but

they all supported Ben in this journey as they watched his confidence grow. He's lost two dress sizes by now. In no more than 4 months. That's...that's a lot in such a short amount of time. The seven of them just correlated it to his new daily gym activities, never even thinking to imagine it could be anything else of any sort.

*"Dear God,"* Mike sighs too softly.

They actually encouraged him. They told him to "keep up the good work", that he's starting to look amazing. Every one of them did. They showered him in praise as they watched this new body form. This new body that was slimming down at an alarming rate, completely ignorant to the battle that was happening before their very eyes. They reminded him how well he was doing, that he was bettering himself. Mike felt his skin grow cold. They actually fucking praised him for losing weight and becoming more conventionally acceptable. They egged this on unknowingly.

"You are not a coward, my love. I-I don't know what I would've done if I were in your situation." Mike starts again, louder this time knowing how easily Bill's mind will swallow itself in guilt and drown further with every 'what if' question.

"We'll talk to him, alright?" He planted another kiss atop the soft, light brown locks. He felt Bill nod gingerly underneath him.

"It'll be okay, Billy Bee." Mike's voice cracked as he attempted to keep his composure, "Ben is going to be okay. He's got all of us. He's got all of us." A few stray tears escaped his eyes and streamed down his cheek as he repeated the mantra over and over again. He did so until he started to believe it himself.

## 2. Chapter 2

### Notes for the Chapter:

If you have disordered eating, not a healthy relationship with food, or are in recovery in some type of way, holidays can be super tricky. But I believe in you!! I'm sending you lots of good, positive vibes.

This chapter is uh, the longest chapter of anything I've ever written and is longer than my longest one shot aaa

It has some heavy stuff. Graphic descriptions of purging as well as really bad thoughts in relation to both food and body and self-worth all that. If that's triggering to you in any way please take care of yourself and do not read !!

this is just me projecting my history of disordered eating but not everyone's experience with ED is universal

All that aside, I want to thank the people who left such lovely comments on the first chapter and to everyone who has read so far. It makes me so happy to know people are reciprocating well with this story.

I hope you're having a wonderful day/night!! and please stay safe!!!

Ben's first diet was when he was still in diapers. According to his mother, he was eating far too much that the average 3-year-old boy should be eating. He was always his mom's "hungry little monster". So Mrs. Hanscom thought that he should be eating less. And in order to do that, she decided to try feeding him half-frozen mini corn dogs in a desperate attempt to satiate his "rampant" appetite. Needless to say, her plan worked out better in theory than in practice. Little Ben

still ate the mini corn dogs regardless of the temperature. That may be the cause as to why he prefers certain foods cold over their normal warm temperature, Ben surmises.

But the first diet Ben can actually remember being put on was appetite suppressants at 7 years old. His parents insisted that these magic blue pills also helped his concentration with his schoolwork, but he wasn't so sure about that. Because obviously, second grade was pretty intense stuff for Ben - who was able to read at a high school level the year before. Every morning when he made his way downstairs for breakfast with his family he would find the bright blue pill next to his unbuttered piece of toast and a single hardboiled, unsalted egg. His parents carefully and silently eyed him until he downed the pill. After the deed was done they would return to their plate of two sausage links, two strips of bacon, a pile of cheesy eggs, and buttered toast.

At 8 years old and starting the third grade, his mom still thought her son was not small enough. No, he was still too large. She decided that they would both go on a low carb diet. No rice, bread, or fruit for young Benny boy. Let alone candy, chips, and anything breaded! It was all plain hamburger patties without the bun and berry bowls for him. This was not the worst diet ever, no. And he did lose 11 lbs the first two weeks, much to his mother's delight.

But at his 9th birthday party, not a single soul he invited came. That was the first time he's ever truly felt alone. Like an outsider. And he wasn't allowed a piece of his own birthday cake. His parents ate a piece while he had blueberries mixed with a low-calorie sweetener. So Ben snuck downstairs in the dead of night, careful of every single step he took on the cold hardwood floor, and ate the rest of the chocolate store-bought mound of pure sugar and calories and everything that he should be afraid of in a fit of frustrated rage.

That's when he started sneaking food from wherever he could manage. Ben was never permitted to eat anything that children his age ate. Because food was just not for grotesque kids like him.

At 9 years old, Ben continued the same low carb for the first 7 months of the year. But the weight on the scale slowly started to plateau and before he knew it, the number started to rise once more.



Ben's weight gain was not welcomed - his mother made sure that it was known that was not pleased with this development. So a new plan of action it was. Mrs. Hanscom subscribed to Jenny Craig and Ben was sent frozen meals monthly. If it meant spending anywhere from \$15-\$23 a meal for her boy to not grow up to be fat, then so be it.

It didn't work.

Freshly 10 years old and back to a low carb diet once again. Ben's life consisted of greek yogurt and salmon. But this was when it started - the sneaking and snacking. On the way home from school, the young kid would stop at the gas station that was slightly out of the way from his house but worth the extra walk. He'd rationalize his purchases with the extra 10 minutes the route took. He'd buy chocolate bars and bags of chips with money he took from his mom's wallet. He would take the family size bags of chips into the dimly lit, ill washed gas station bathroom and gorge. He'd finish the bag in one sitting. And as soon as he got home and finished another high protein dinner, Ben would carefully unwrap the chocolate bars in his room and eat as many as his stomach could handle.

And he hated himself for it every time.

A year later was more of the same but with a new shiny addition to his life: a gym membership. Ben still grew bigger, an hour on the elliptical 5 days a week didn't prevent that from happening. He saw the disappointment written on his mom's face at his nightly weigh-ins. He saw the way his mom's brows would furrow, her lips stretched in a thin line and the deep exhale that would escape her mouth. The shake of her head and then utter silence for the rest of the night, sometimes lasting an entire week if the number was high enough.

By middle school, Ben was at a weight that no one else his age was. He couldn't stand himself for it. He couldn't stand his body. He hated food, absolutely despised it. But he also craved it so desperately. Food was the enemy. Every high fructose corn syrup product, every crisp drenched in pure salt, every piece of fried chicken nugget was something he dreamt of. He'd watch fast-food commercials and his stomach would drop and his mind would grow hazy. Food was the

ultimate pleasure, the ultimate vice. It was the ultimate sin.

His mind would sort of turn on this switch when it went hazy like that. He'd go as far as to take a can of spam to his room and eat it raw from the can just to...eat. His brain would go on autopilot - he would be fully aware of what he's doing when he open up his backpack and taking out 50 cold chicken McNuggets. And he'd eat every single one knowingly. And he'd wake up the next morning with such an indescribable tightness to his stomach that it almost took his breath away. He'd swear he'd never do it again.

But he always did.

Food made him bad. Because being fat was the worst thing you could be; Mrs. Hanscom said so. He was less of a person because of his weight. He would never be respected or valued at his size. Ben didn't want to ugly. He didn't want to be wrong or unappealing - he wanted to be loved for being good. But who could ever love a fat boy?

He continued to indulge. He'd buy extra burritos and chicken strips at lunchtime just to take home and eat cold in the middle of the night. And eventually, his mom gave up.

Ben was a disappointment. He was "the fat boy" that his mother so desperately went out of her way for him not to become. He was her worst nightmare. And no one could ever love the fat boy.

Until people did indeed love the fat boy. He met the losers that fateful day at the quarry. The group of them all had their own vices. They each had their own quirks that made them who they were. Things that they couldn't control and things that had the potential to control their lives - these said things that made them a loser. Hyperactivity, hypochondriac neurosis, obsessive compulsivity, speech impediments, parental abuse/neglect, PTSD, public shame, and so much more made up the seven of them. But despite all of these "imperfections", all of these qualities that made their individual existences more difficult, they found solace when they were all together. They supported one another. They were accepted as they are from one another for the first time in their young lives. And that bond was powerful.

One of Ben's proudest moments was when he decided to build a safe haven, the clubhouse, for his friends. He wanted to create a space that the Losers could call their own. Their home. A safe place away from bad environments and people and memories. For a while, his visits at the gas stations weren't just for soda and Whoppers but also for purchasing tape and nails.

It took a few months of blood, sweat, and tears. He had many trips to the library to look at blueprints and read all he could about how to secure walls and such. He was thankful for his school bus pass because he went on more bus rides to Home Depot for supplies than he did for actual class. But he knew Stan and Eddie were both prone to worry about safety and cleanliness and he didn't want his friends to have to worry about a single thing in their clubhouse.

It was certainly taxing on Ben, that's for sure. However, all of the hard work was worth it just to see the smiles on their faces. He created something that was uniquely for them to exist with one another and they loved him for it. He quickly learned that their happiness and well being was more important to him than his very own.

But even when he had people in his life who accepted him as he is, Ben still continued to fall further into destructive eating habits. He continued to binge in secrecy. He couldn't eat in front of his favorite people for so, so long. But when he finally allowed himself to eat a slice of cake at Mike's 15th birthday party, no one even bat an eye. He didn't catch anyone giving him any sort of looks and didn't hear any comments related to him being a "fat pig" in any way. None of the losers made him feel bad for eating and enjoying himself. In fact, he got the exact opposite. He got a wink and a genuine smile from Bev. Not that he thought they would make a scene or anything, but whenever he thinks about food in any capacity Ben hears his mom's voice in the back of his head saying he's not allowed to eat.

As the group got older, they grew closer. They were there for each other through the hell that is known as public high school. And Ben fell in love with Beverly Marsh. I mean, he did the second he met her. Those baby blue eyes and beautiful red hair combined with a kind smile and warm heart was something he didn't know could actually exist outside of his favorite novels.

But it did - she did. And her name is Beverly Marsh.

Years of pining later, Richie and Eddie were officially together by sophomore year much to literally no one's surprise. Stan, Mike, and Bill not long after. And finally Ben and Bev by the end of their sophomore year.

But what happened next was the most unexpected development. Their love for one another, all seven individuals, expanded beyond strictly platonic. It started off with small touches followed by fluttering hearts and heated cheeks. It consisted of make-out sessions with their partners and imagining doing the same with another loser. And it turns out it was reciprocated throughout the group.

There was a lot of miscommunication and hurt feelings. There was a 'sexuality crisis' on Eddie and Ben's end as they both previously identified as a monosexual person - Eddie gay and Ben straight. But sexuality is fluid and labels don't have to be so strict and restricting. The Losers Club almost didn't survive the whole ordeal, but they did. And by senior year they were all dating one another.

They survived and graduated. And all decided to move their lives over to Los Angeles for school and other opportunities. It wasn't easy, no. But they all made it into schools that were fairly close. For some, it wasn't their first choice, but if it meant being together that was all they needed to hear. Sacrifices were made, but as Richie would always say, as long as you get the paper that says "I finished the school thing so I am qualified to do the work thing", then who cares where it comes from?

Ben's life post established relationship was going, to put it simply, absolutely fucking great. He found what he was passionate about and gotten into an amazing architecture program. He was surrounded by the closest people in his life. He wasn't feeling the need to binge on greasy foods in the middle of the night to feel something. Well, not nearly as much anyway.

He had a group of people who he loved with every fiber in his being and people who loved him back. Ben had a solid, constant support system for the first time in his life.

But this support system, albeit indescribably wonderful, was equally as indescribably beautiful.

Richie had grown to be 6'3" and had this 'queer art student who isn't an art student but very queer and will let it be known' vibe. He has long black curls, big 'ol clear framed circle glasses, a jawline that could quite literally cut you and cheekbones to match. He had the most eccentric style of the guys and experimented constantly. One day he'd be wearing red mesh long sleeve shirt with a checkered t-shirt over paired with high waisted black pants and big chunky doc marten boots. Another day he'd walk out the door in a thrifted 80's color-block pastel windbreaker and pastel purple creepers. And for the hell of it he'd borrow one of Bev's overall skirts and bright red lipstick. And he pulled it all off.

Eddie was the shortest of them all and he was absolutely breathtaking. He certainly had his awkward teenage phase but the second he started college it was as if the guy went through a second puberty. One thing that didn't change was that his hair was always neatly styled. But he developed his own fashion taste. He was always seen in clean, obviously well-picked outfits. Eddie was a fan of color coordination and accessorizing. He loved a good light collared button-down under a darker shaded sweater paired with well-fitted pants and matching accessories. Living with a seamstress meant he could get pants to fit him like a glove, and with an ass like his, Bev made sure they did.

Mike was the second tallest but the most muscular. All of that farm work certainly showed with his large biceps and abs. He was toned and gorgeous. He was a fan of more autumnal and bright colors, similar to those that you'd find at the Hanlon farm. He loved yellows and orange and pinks. And those colors certainly popped on his beautiful dark skin and suddenly you couldn't take your eyes off of the literal sunshine that is Michael Hanlon. The epitome of handsome masculinity paired with light, soft clothing? Literal soul healing content right there.

Bill Denbrough AKA the most in-demand male model at Bev's fashion school. He picked her up from class one day and walked out of the classroom with 5 gigs and a whole lot of extra cash in his wallet. He's was your "boy next store", bring him home to impress your father

type of beauty. He wasn't as slim as Richie but not quite as muscular as Mike since he didn't do much to work out. Although he never outgrew his love for flannel shirts, he just learned how to style them better. Plus he'd throw on a bomber jacket every now and then to spice things up; maybe even a necklace and rings if he were feeling really bold that day. His light eyes and soft, pillowy lips (he thanks his Korean Grandma for those) were as striking as ever. The auburn hair that framed his face so perfectly was certainly the cherry on top.

Stan never ditched his button-downs and clean outfits. He was always described as older than his time and his fashion choices reflected that. But when he started college he found a new love - turtlenecks. And seeing a 6'0 man with pale skin, light brown and really curly hair in a black turtleneck with plaid slacks was something Ben didn't know he was so wrongfully deprived of for so long until he saw it. He had a routine every night to pick out his outfits. It was after he finished his skincare routine for the night that he'd sit in front of his closet and carefully plan for the day ahead. The attention to detail certainly paid off.

Bev, beautiful Bev, could do no wrong. Getting into the fashion business meant she had access to so many different styles and products. It was all practically at her disposal. Like Richie, she's a bit unpredictable in terms of her own style. She loved thrifted clothes and will always have a soft spot for floral dresses. But she certainly loved wearing dark colors - black to be more specific. She dressed as if she were part of her own coven. Mesh tops, black skirts, vintage jewelry, plum lipstick and nails, and black fishnets were becoming signature pieces in her wardrobe. If she decided to not pursue that side of fashion anymore she would certainly have a promising career as a model.

And Ben? Well, he never outgrew his awkward phase. He ditched the cargo shorts in exchange for better fitting jeans and slacks at least. At 5'10 he wasn't the tallest man, but he was the biggest. He loved oversized hoodies and sweaters. Bev got him a windbreaker and he wore that thing into the ground. He doesn't know what his style is or what he likes. Why?

Ben doesn't like himself. His lovers have been unbelievably kind and patient with him. And with their love and affirmations, it has gotten

easier.

But then he started going to the gym for the first time since he was 11 years old with two other guys from one of his welding classes. They all decided to go as a pact to bulk up after he left the first day of class with the inability to raise his arms without rampant shaking. It helped that they were a bit on the bigger side even if they weren't as big as him.

He was able to see results within the first few weeks, much to his delight. After a grueling day of classes, visits to the gym with his buds became part of his routine. It felt nice that he was making this decision himself. Ben was consciously choosing to go to the gym himself as well as making an effort to eat better.

But when you lose 7 lbs in a week, you just want to lose more. And you start giving up more and more foods. No more ice cream turns in to no more fast food which turns into no more Starbucks which turns into no more dark meat which turns into no more chips which then turns into no more candy. You get the idea.

He started to actively count his calories. It started with 1,800 a day. And he'd pre-make meals and pack snacks accordingly. But then he started only eating 1,500. And then 1,000.

He started going on jogs when he had more than an hour in between classes. Sometimes he couldn't make it to the gym on busy workdays, usually Fridays with his 4 classes and then work, it was impossible. So he'd sneak out in the middle of the night and run for 3 hours and wake up the next morning exhausted.

Thinking about all of the calories he's indulged in throughout his life made him even more motivated. He's eaten far too much for someone his age. Hell, he's probably consumed more calories in his lifetime than a 90-year-old has. And he should be ashamed for that. He should be punished. He doesn't deserve to eat any more food, no. He's had far too much of that already.

He wasn't sure how it got to this point. It all happened so fast - almost instantly. For the first time in his life, he was seeing results. He was losing weight. He was becoming *good*. Finally, after an entire

lifetime of being bad. He was turning his life around. His partners deserved that.

And that was addicting. Seeing the scale drop every single morning was its own kind of drug. The reactions he was getting from his weight loss though was even more intoxicating than that though. Every praise, every single word of encouragement, only pushed him further. It gave him the motivation to continue. His lovers were loving this new body. Ben would no longer be an embarrassment to be seen with compared to the perfect, stunning people he was fortunate enough to call his boyfriends and girlfriend. He would no longer be the odd one out. No one would look at him in their group and wonder why he was there anymore.

Bev and Richie took him out on a little shopping date when his pants finally became too big and he no longer fit the smallest loop of his belt. They finally had it when they watched Ben poke a hole with a pen at his belt after work one day.

The two of them made Ben their own personal little doll that day. He could see how much fun they were having with this new body. They'd throw outfits at him to try on with sultry eyes and giggles. And there were things Ben never thought he could pull off.

He walked out of the dressing room with a black and white striped long sleeve shirt paired with black overalls. And his two gorgeous angels wasted absolutely no time shoving him back in, their mouths hungrily kissing and sucking at his neck. He left the store wearing a turtleneck that he tried on the outfit before.

So, carbs became scary again just like they were when he was 8 years old. He'd be offered a bagel after class by Mike and his stomach would drop. Stan would sneak a piece of toast on his plate at breakfast and he would carefully eat his way around the square piece of "danger weight gain". When Eddie would make his, well Rich coined the term, "world-famous Eddie's Kasprakkie Spaghetti" dinner, he'd focus on the salad portion and only eat a few noodles. He knew he had to really get Richie going during dinners like these, so questions about his thoughts on Steve Roger's sexuality and climate change were asked. But thinking about how the noddles on his plate were drenched in butter made his mind grow hazy in a



different way than it did in his childhood.

That was the most difficult thing to keep up though. Eating with his partners was no longer a luxury but was now a chore that he had to keep up appearances. Luckily, all of their schedules were so full with work and school and other commitments that they couldn't exactly track everyone's eating habits. So it was easy for him to just say he ate at school and just as easy to talk his way through meals. Besides, he'd much rather be entranced by his partners as they go on about their day than consume dangerous, bad calories.

One day he ate a veggie tofu rice bowl at the cafeteria at his school and his mind started going a thousand miles a second.

*That was way too many calories. Two cups of white jasmine rice are approximately 410 calories plus the fried tofu is an additional 300 calories. The vegetables that were cooked in oil has to be at least 200-400 calories. The teriyaki sauce...I'm not sure? I'll have to check that. 100-300 calories? The soy sauce alone is another 30 calories but all that sodium adds up. You had a 380 calorie kale smoothie this morning and a 100 calorie protein bar. That's almost 2,000 calories and it's not even 2 PM.*

He has to do something about it. He has to now or it'll be too late. He did a bad thing. He's over his calorie intake. That means he'll gain weight. He will get fatter. He will get uglier. He'll get even more disgusting. He doesn't have time for the gym to make up for it either. And he has two exams tomorrow so he can't work out late.

So he throws his laptop in his bag and practically runs to the single stall, all-gender bathroom across the building. Silently thanking whatever deity is out there that it wasn't he occupied, Ben locks the door behind him and falls to his knees, lifting the toilet lid. After a few moments of staring at the water, he finally sticks his fingers down his throat. It doesn't work at first - he just gags and chokes loudly but with no results.

Two minutes later, his middle and index finger flailing violently up and down as they jab at the back of his throat, a wave of nausea hits him and he quickly removes his fingers. His face immediately gets hot and there's a tight throbbing at the front of his skull. It's a constant dull pulsing. He watches some of the contents of the meal

splash into the toilet bowl for the first time through his blurred vision from the tears that are streaming down his face. A few more good jabs and successful attempts later, all he can taste is stomach acid.

And just like that, his mistake is gone. His stomach is empty and he doesn't have to worry about getting fatter anymore. It's a magic answer! This routine is reliable.

It is safe.

Until it's not safe.

Not when he's on the familiar cool ground of the Starbucks bathroom, fingers lodged down his throat and the blister on his middle knuckle aching as he empties his stomach of the salad he ate for lunch with his boyfriend.

It's not safe when he's almost finished, he hears sniffles.

It's not safe when he whips his head around he can see the familiar green converse outside the stall door.

It's not safe when he hears the broken intakes of air and stuttered "oh god" escape from his lips.

It's not safe when watches the converse frantically run away, the soles of his shoes squeaking against the shiny floor loudly as he goes.

It's not safe when he's gone within seconds.

It's not safe when he's hurt someone he loves.

And it's not safe when he's alone.

### 3. Chapter 3

Ben was suddenly too aware of how cool the tile was beneath his knees. His elbow rested limply on the toilet seat as he tried to process what just happened. The dull pulsing at the front part of his head and the sound of his heartbeat that he's grown used to was keeping him somewhat still in reality. He wasn't sure just how long he sat there in utter silence listening only to the sound of his own breathing and heartbeat.

Bill, his wonderful and beautiful Billy Bee, knew. He knows. He heard him. His cover was blown. He's going to tell the others. Now they are all going to know what a fat disappointment he is. He has to face them.

God, they are going to *know*.

After what felt like hours, Ben took a shaky breath and finally got up from his crouched position on the floor. He grabbed some toilet paper and wiped off his saliva covered hand and face before flushing it down the toilet. He left the stall and went over to the sink, absolutely refusing to look at his own reflection. He washed his hands carefully and bent over to get some tap water himself to swish around his mouth before spitting it back out into the sink. He read that brushing your teeth after purging is actually worse since you're scrubbing the stomach acid into your teeth. Or something. So swishing it is.

He walked out of the bathroom and popped a mint into his mouth as he shot a quick text to his manager at Target letting her know that he "caught a stomach bug" and won't be making it back after lunch. The

store is overstaffed and luckily for Ben, the middle-aged tiny Japanese woman absolutely adored him. Older ladies always loved him. Richie always said it was just part of the “Haystack charm”.

He quickly eyed around the store looking for any trace of auburn hair, and not to his surprise, he couldn't find any. His stomach dropped even further, realizing that he's going to have to go home and face this. He's going to have to do this in their sacred shared space. They may not want to share it anymore with someone who's so fucked up.

“Looking for Bill?” Ben whipped around to meet eyes with Jayce, one of Bill's coworkers. The lanky blue-haired kid stared back with a look of, well if he had to read it, concern.

“Uh,” Ben gulped, “Yeah. Did he head off?”

“Yup,” Jayce nodded, pointing towards the door, “I don't know where he went though. It happened sorta fast but, uh, he seemed pretty freaked.”

Ben winced but still nodded. He quickly thanked Jayce and grabbed his coat from the chair. He threw the rest of his lunch away before heading out the door himself.

The chill of mid-December air hit him the second he stepped foot outside. Even in Los Angeles, it was 57 degrees out with a fairly cool wind chill. Even if he became accustomed to the harsh Maine winters, cold is still cold. He shoves his hands in the black bomber jacket Bev picked out and decides that he'll make the 30-minute walk

home instead of taking the bus or calling an Uber. He usually carpooled with Bill if he didn't have their family truck (Mike's fathers) for the week. But Eddie had the truck this week.

Ben knows that he could use the half-hour to attempt to clear up the thoughts that are seemingly going a million miles a minute in his head.

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"Should-should I text him?" Bill asks quietly after a good lapse of silence falls between the two. His voice is slightly muffled in Mike's chest.

Mike hummed and shook his head. "Probably not. I'd wait a bit more before trying to contact him. Knowing Ben, he's probably on his way home right now. We don't want to overwhelm him more than he probably is right now, right?"

"I-I was his r-r-ride," Bill took a sharp inhale at the realization, "it's c-cold outs-s-side I-I-I."

"Bill," Mike kissed the top of his head, "It's okay. Ben likes going on walks. He probably needs one right about now."

Bill sighed in defeat, "I just don't w-want him to th-think I'm m...mad at him."

The larger man nodded as he listened to Bill's words, "We're going to have to talk about this for sure. But we won't attack him - that won't do any good. He just needs to know we're there for him. That we love him as he is." Mike pauses, the familiar burning sensation back in his eyes as they start to well up returning. "Because I-I don't think he really knows..." He shot his head back and practically burned holes in the ceiling with his eyes and took a deep breath. He couldn't break down again.

"Ben w-will know. He w-will." Bill affirms, his voice more steady than it has been since he's gotten home.

Almost on cue, the two men perk their heads up and uncurl themselves from one another at the sound of the front door unlocking. They both watch, in what feels like slow motion, the door slowly creek open. A broken Ben appears before their very eyes. His usually put together hair is windblown and his cheeks are flushed. For a man who stood at a solid 6'2", he has never looked so small. He closes the door behind him and just stands there, looking so frightened and ashamed. It reminds Mike of a child who's waiting for their parents to lecture them after they get caught sneaking an extra cookie from the cookie jar. Ben thinks he's in trouble. He avoids their gaze, eyes glued to the floor and he wraps his arms around himself. It's as if the man is trying to hold himself together.

"Ben," Mike tries his best to keep his voice as calm and steady as he can. He stands up from the couch, Bill quickly following.

They watch as Ben starts to violently shake his head. His shoulders start to tremble.

"I-I'm sorry," he chokes out, "If you guys don't want me anymore I understand. I-I can find a place and move I'm sorry I-"

Mike and Bill waste no time making their way over to their boyfriend and wrapping him up in their arms. They need to shut this train of thought down and they needed to do it now. They meet each other eyes over Ben's shaking form and have a silent, unspoken conversation. This whole thing stems deeper than they initially thought. How could Ben think that they wouldn't want him, wouldn't love him anymore?

"Ben, listen to me, baby. We love you so, so much. We're not mad at you. Not at all," Mike starts, unwrapping himself from his lovers and taking Ben's hand in his. "We're concerned. Not mad, not upset at you. Never. There is nothing you could do that make me love you any less, you know that right?"

Ben shakes his head again, not trusting himself to speak without completely breaking down in front of them both. He's already been a disappointment enough for one day.

"Ben y-y-you are so g-g-g-" Bill takes a deep breath, "beautiful. Absolutely beautiful. I love you so m-much." He gently cradled his jaw in his hand and used his thumb to lightly wipe the stray tears that escaped those blue eyes he adores so much. The way Ben leans into the touch makes his heart feel just a touch lighter than it has been since he got home.

"We love you," Mike places his finger under Ben's chin, turning his head gently so he can look him in the eyes. "Please believe me when I say that."

Ben's lip quivers, and musters up the energy to give a small hum of acknowledgment. Mike lets go of his hand and locks his arm with Ben's.

“We can talk more about this later, Benny. When the others are home.” He pushes the black jacket off of Ben’s shoulders and hangs it on the rack adjacent to where they were standing. “We can just sit together. Would that be alright?”

Ben, still not trusting himself to speak, meekly nods once more and toes off his boots. The two lead him to the couch and Mike decides it's best if he lets Ben make the moves on how he wants to be held. But Ben curls up to Mike’s chest almost immediately as he’s the tallest of the three.

Mike smiles softly and wraps his arms around his shoulders, careful to not hold him too tight. Bill plants himself on the other side of Mike and takes Ben’s hand in his. He starts rubbing the inside of his wrists with his thumb in tiny circles which causes him to take a shuddering breath.

“W-we got you,” Bill kisses his knuckles, trying his best not to visibly react to the red scarring he’s been so oblivious to before. “Try to get s-some s..sleep.”

Ben closes his eyes, not realizing just how exhausted he actually was from the events and emotions of the day so far. He lets himself be held. He doesn’t want to let the immediate anxiety of how Mike can feel his plush stomach against the toned body of his ruin the moment. He doesn’t want the sinking feeling of how this love will inevitably end suffocate him once more.

Because this, right here and right now, is safe. Maybe things will be safe. Maybe, just maybe, he can be safe.



But it's not going to be easy. Hell, it hasn't even truly begun yet. It can't until everyone knows. But he can worry about that in a few hours. For now, the soft baritone hums coming from Mike's mouth and gentle but firm touches from both his lovers are all he needs to focus on.

### **Notes for the Chapter:**

Things will get less angsty!!! I swear! but,,, for now there will be lots of angst.

I promise you Ben will get the love and happiness he deserves!!!! He just has to suffer for now because I'm terrible.

Also, I apologize for the switching of POVs. I'm not sure if I should write the rest in Ben's perspective or like,,, different losers and how they react/think etc etc. If you guys have any thoughts/recommendations/criticism pls let me kno!!!

## 4. Chapter 4

### Notes for the Chapter:

Hi everyone!! I basically whipped this up in my phone notes in 20 minutes during my break so I apologize for how short it is and for the mistakes!

It's also my bday today and the best present I could get...is you guys enjoying it.

I hope this suffices for now! I'll try my best to get more chapter out soon!

Richie was thoroughly enjoying his lunch with Eddie. The two of them were at Panera bread, per his request. Richie slurped his broccoli cheddar bread bowl loudly, causing Eddie to punch his arm every time in annoyance. But he could always read the smirk on his face when he would lean over and wipe the side of his mouth with a napkin, muttering about how sloppy Richie was - Eddie loved it. He loved him.

Richie's therapy session wasn't anything too taxing today. He has made strides over the last few months. After he got an ADHD diagnosis and started to learn more in-depth what this disorder actually entails, he felt a sense of relief. It's more than "can't sit still" disorder; it can be debilitating and has been most of his life. He learned that no, he wasn't just stupid or lazy like his parents always said. He wasn't incapable and annoying like all of the teachers throughout his education thus far had drilled into him. This diagnosis wasn't an excuse - It was a reason. Going on meds has been a bit of a rough experience. Trying to find the right combination that worked best for him has been a bit of a frustrating experience so far. But he is learning how to manage his symptoms and in turn, so were his partners.

"Ya know, Eds," Richie took his now empty bread bowl and took a big bite out of the side, "I don't know how you're able to pack so much in that tiny baby bod and still look so good."

“Jesus Christ Rich, please don’t call me that. Especially with your mouth full!” Eddie scoffed, shaking his head, “And for your information, I work out. And I don’t eat that much compared to you Mr. 2 AM Dorrito man.”

Richie instantly spat out a “HAH” at the nickname, a few crumbs escaping his mouth before swallowing with a loud gulp, “Well Edward, Mr. 2 AM Dorrito man here sucked you off real go-”

“RICHIE,” Eddie practically flung himself across the table and threw his hand over his mouth, “Please, not when we’re surrounded by old white people.” He hissed.

“What, don’t want them to be jelly of our impeccable sex life? They wish they had six hot ass people to satisfy them. We’re basically gods, dude.”

“Richie I swear to god if you don’t-” Eddie’s rant was cut off mid-way by the sound of both of their phones going off.

Richie’s previous “little shit” demeanor changed within a split second when he read the text. His shoulders fell and he started to hunch over on himself, his mouth agape as he stared at his phone. He could feel Eddie’s eyes on him.

“Rich?” His eyes flew up at his name. “What is it?”

“Mike texted. Family meeting,” He answered as Eddie fell back into his seat. “It’s uh, level 8.”

When they established their relationships, they quickly learned how vital proper communication was. When there’s seven people under one roof, especially when they’re all romantically involved with one another, things can get easily lost in translation. They set up a code of conduct, a sort of indirect scale of how vital certain needs were. Level 1 meeting means there isn’t an emergency at all. Level 10 means drop everything and get there ASAP because of death or something very close. They’ve had a few level 6’s for situations like Stan having really terrifying intrusive thoughts or obsessive cleaning episodes. They’ve also had level 5’s for Eddie’s panic attacks or Bill having flashbacks. 4’s for Mike needing cuddles and reassurance,

same with Bev. But they have never, ever gone above a 7. Not until now.

“Wait! What?” Eddie exclaimed, grabbing his phone out of his pocket and scanning over the group message.”

“ ‘Hey everyone. Not to alarm you, but mandatory family meeting. Level 8. Please be here as soon as you can. I’ll be waiting in the living room with Bill and Ben. Love you all, Mike. ‘ ” Eddie read aloud, his voice still dripped in panic.

“Hey, Eds, look at me.” Richie took his hand, “It’ll be okay. Let’s just throw our stuff away and head over. We’ll see what’s up, okay?”

Eddie nodded and shot up to collect his stuff on the tray. Within 30 seconds his stuff was in the trash and he was already out the door before Richie even sat up.

He sighed, fumbling to get his stuff together and into the trash. He jogged out the door, the pit in his stomach growing deeper by the second.

At least he knows that this is going to be the shortest ride home yet.